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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine if differences exist between the leadership behaviors of men and women in special education administrative positions in Florida. Participants consisted of 28 exceptional student education directors--14 male and 14 female--along with all 28 of their respective superintendents and two staff members, one male and one female, under each director. The "Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire Form XII" was used to collect the information. Results indicated that male exceptional student education directors scored higher than their female counterparts in overall leadership behavior. Also in each of the 12 instances where differences were recorded, female directors were rated lower than males. Staff members rated the directors lower on the total leadership score than did superintendents, and the directors rated themselves lower than did any other group. Possible implications of these findings are discussed. A three-page bibliography is included. (TE)

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Perceived leadership behavior of male and female exceptional student education directors in the state of Florida

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Running Head: PERCEIVED LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR

Abstract

A study was conducted to determine if differences exist between the leadership behaviors of men in special education administrative positions and women in special education administration positions in the state of Florida. The participants for the study consisted of 28 superintendents, 14 male exceptional student education directors, 14 female student education directors, 28 female exceptional student education staff members and 28 male exceptional student education staff members. The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire Form XII (L.3.D.Q. Form XII) was used to collect the information.

One major hypothesis and 12 subhypotheses, stated in terms of the L.B.D.Q. Form XII, were addressed in this study.

A significant difference was noted in the major hypothesis in that male exceptional student education directors scored higher than female exceptional student education directors. Responses to the sub-hypotheses indicate differences in the majority of

the sub-scale scores. In all instances where differences existed, female directors were rated lower than were male directors. Numerous reasons for these differences are proffered.

Perceived leadership behavior of male and female exceptional student education directors in the State of Florida

Introduction

Research in the area of educational administration has usually focused on men. Literature concerning women in educational administration has dealt with comparative studies of female administrators versus male administrators; discrimination against female administrators; women in higher educational administration; and women as principals and assistant principals. Very little literature exists concerning women as administrators in district level management and supervisory positions. A study by Kohl and Marro (1972) presently exists comparing the leadership behaviors of men and women in the field of special education. The purpose of this present study was to determine what differences, if any, in perceived leadership behaviors existed between men and women currently employed in district level special

education administrative positions. The Leadership Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire Form XII (LBDQ Form XII) was the instrument used to assess these possible differences.

Literature

The common theme throughout the majority of literature reviewed concerning women in educational administration is that of discrimination (Collins, 1977; Cronin & Pancrazio, 1979; Estler, 1975; Howard, 1975; Muhich, 1974; Taylor, 1963; Timpano, 1976). Few researchers have attempted to define the leadership characteristics necessary for females to be successful in the predominantly male field of educational administration. Studies relating to the status of special educational administration are presently included in the literature (Burello & Sage, 1970, Kohl & Marro, 1972; Mann & Sabitino, 1973) but no studies have been found that specifically address the leadership characteristics of women in administrative positions.

While women make up the majority of teachers in this country, they make up the minority of

administrators (Estler, 1975; Howard, 1975, Johnston, Yeaky, & Moore, 1980). Recent national surveys show that 66% of all public school teachers and 80% of all public elementary school teachers are female, but that 98% of all high school principals and 99% of all superintendents are male (Johnston, Yeaky, & Moore, 1980). Hansot and Tyach (1982) state that, despite contrary predictions, males still dominate the top positions in educational administration and even have replaced women where the women had gained positions, such as elementary principalships. Beliefs that women do not aspire to or are too emotional to hold administrative positions and are unqualified, ineffective administrators have been discounted by numerous studies (Edson, 1981; Johnston et. al., 1980; Mertz, Grossnickle & Tutcher, 1980). Yet the subordinate status of women in educational administration remains a fact.

Kohl and Marro's (1972) research study dealing with the local administration of exceptional student education programs discovered that: (a) nearly 75% of the administrators were men, (b) men were more often

given the title, Director, whereas women tended to be addressed by the title, Supervisor or Coordinator, (c) men possessed higher educational degrees than women, (d) men were younger than women in special education administration positions, (f) men viewed themselves as leaders slightly more so than did women in special education administration positions in large systems, more than women in smaller systems, more than women with doctorates, much more than women with lesser educational degrees, more than women with less years experience. Leadership behavior has been studied by professionals in various disciplines (Cartwright & Zander, 1953; Stogdill, 1974) and with various approaches, such as a psychological approach (i.e., the individual dimension) and a sociological approach (i.e., the organizational approach). Theories discussing leadership behavior range from a situational specific perspective to the "great man concept." One theory about which researchers have been concerned is the theory of behavior of leadership. Investigations include both individual and organizational dimensions of leadership (Lipham,

1964). Halpin (1959) described the behavioral approach to the study of leadership as focusing upon "the observed behavior rather than upon a posited capacity inferred from this behavior" (p.12).

Procedures

The superintendents, exceptional student education directors, and exceptional student education staff members in the 67 counties of the state of Florida were asked to participate in this study of leadership behavior of men and women administrators of special education programs. The directors were divided into male and female groups, and 20 male and 20 female directors were randomly chosen from each group to act as participants. The male superintendents of these selected persons were also chosen as participants, as were a male and female subordinate of each selected director. The Florida Education Directory was used as the source of names and addresses of those persons asked to participate in the study.

The superintendents who participated completed a copy of the L.B.D.Q. Form XII as it pertained to their

perceptions of the leadership behavior of their special education director. The special education staff members, one male and one female, each completed the L.B.D.Q. Form XII as it pertained to their perceived leadership behavior of their director. The directors each completed the L.B.D.Q. Form XII, regarding their own perceptions of their leadership behavior, and a Background Survey Instrument. Comparisons among the four groups perceptions were made using an analysis of variance technique. Descriptive data were collected from the background survey instrument.

Results

Several interesting outcomes of the study were noted. The main bypothesis, that no significant differences in perceived leadership behaviors of the directors existed, was rejected. Staff members rated the directors lower on the total leadership score than did superintendents. Female directors were rated significantly lower than male directors on the total leadership score. Also, the directors rated themselves lower than did any other group.

Discussion

Although the literature on the subject reflects that a leader's behavior is not affected by his/her sex, a significant difference on the scores between the male and female directors was found based on sex. Female directors were perceived as exhibiting less leadership behavior than were male directors. Reasons for this difference occurring may include the lack of opportunity to exhibit leadership behaviors, lack of opportunity for women to learn leadership behaviors, and, thirdly, that the participant expectations of the directors differed somehow.

An interesting note is that the directors rated themselves lower in overall leadership behavior than did any of the other groups. Stogdill, Scott, and Jaynes (1965) state that there is a socially defined set of expectations with every position that applies to the behavior of the person in that position. According to these authors, there are self expectations and there are expectations by others that refer to appropriate behavior. Since these expectations do not function independently, it

appears plausible that these directors were rating themselves based on self expectations that they perceived appropriate, and that their staff members and superintendents were rating the directors on a different set of expectations.

The fact that female directors were rated lower than were male directors needs to be examined more closely. All the superintendents queried were male. Since Kohl and Marro (1972) concluded that men in administrative positions view themselves as leaders more so than do women, it is possible that men view other men more as leaders than they do women.

Perceptions of exceptional student education directors' leadership behavior as viewed by themselves and their staff members rated the directors lower on the total score than did superintendents. Perhaps the participants' job may have affected their perceptions of the directors' leadership behavior. Superintendents may not have as many opportunities to observe the directors exhibiting leadership behavior as do the directors and staff members and, therefore, may assume much of the behavior exists. Another explanation of the differences may be that different jobs have different responsibilities. Differences in total scores, based on job, may be considered a

function of the participant's job responsibilities. To support this, Stogdill (1959) concludes that leaders are expected to play a different role than group members, which also could account for the differences in total scores found based on the job of the respondent.

Participants' responses indicate differences existing in the majority of subscale scores were based on the job of the respondent. Participants' responses also imply that leadership behavior is perceived similarly by directors and staff members. In all instances in which subscale scores differed according to the sex of the director, female directors were rated lower than male directors.

Conclusions

Male and female exceptional student education directors in the State of Florida, their superordinates and their subordinates were surveyed on 12 dimensions of leadership behaviors. The results from this study tend to support the conclusion that significant differences in the perceived leadership behavior of the directors exist, and seems to be significantly related to the director's sex and to the job of those whose perceptions were surveyed. Apparently, traditional career aspirations of women are

being reinforced by the educational system. One cannot conclude from this study that the results are due to discrimination. Nor can one conclude from the results that such discrimination does not exist.

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